

State of California  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
San Diego Region

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
April 13, 2005

ITEM: 10

SUBJECT: INFORMATION: Report on the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project. Directors of the SCCWRP will give a presentation on their organization, explaining the unique role it plays in providing the technical foundation for many of the Board's priority projects. Important research projects will be highlighted. (*Art Coe*)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is to provide information to the Regional Board on the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) research projects that are being conducted for the Regional Board or are related to Regional Board projects. The Board has no action to take on this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE: There are no requirements for public notice for this item.

DISCUSSION: SCCWRP is a joint powers agency focusing on environmental research in Southern California's coastal waters. The agency was founded in 1969 via a joint powers agreement between the cities of San Diego and Los Angeles and the county sanitation districts of Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura counties. Since 1990, SCCWRP has been governed by a nine member Commission made up of representatives of organizations that discharge wastewater to the ocean (City of Los Angeles, City of San Diego, Los Angeles County Sanitation District and Orange County Sanitation District) and those that regulate discharges (San Diego, Santa Ana and Los Angeles regional water boards, State Water Resources Control Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Beginning in 2001, recognizing the impact of stormwater discharges on the waters of the Southern California Bight, the SCCWRP Commission modified their joint powers agreement and extended invitations to agencies responsible for stormwater systems to become non-voting members. To date the counties of Ventura and Los Angeles have accepted. The County of Orange acceptance is anticipated within the next month or so.

SCCWRP has spearheaded the ongoing regional ocean monitoring efforts for the Southern California Bight. Surveys were conducted

in 1994, 1998 and 2003 and will be repeated at five-year intervals in the future. These studies have been accomplished as a result of unprecedented coordination of efforts by multiple organizations and thus far have yielded the most comprehensive assessments of ocean water quality across the Bight that have ever been available.

Two of the SCCWRP's studies most relevant to ongoing Regional Board projects are the recently concluded Mission Bay epidemiological study, and the ongoing Sediment Quality Objectives study. These studies were initiated under contract with the Regional Board. Mission Bay suffers from impaired water quality due to elevated bacteria levels. The epidemiological study was initiated in part to investigate whether or not there was a health risk from swimming in Mission Bay, and if so, could the risk be correlated to the different bacteria sources. The study found no increased health risk to swimmers at Mission Bay beaches.

SCCWRP is also providing technical support under contract with the State Board for the development of statewide sediment quality objectives (SQOs) for enclosed bays and estuaries. This effort has been underway since late 2001 and was initiated in response to an environmental interest lawsuit against the SWRCB for failing to develop SQOs in accordance with the California Water Code. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2007. The numeric SQOs developed in this program will be based on protecting sensitive aquatic life represented by marine sediment dwelling organisms (e.g., benthic macroinvertebrate community). Narrative objectives developed in this project will address the protection of beneficial uses influenced by contaminant bioaccumulation. The development of the sediment quality objectives will greatly assist the Regional Board in its work to increase the pace of contaminated marine sediments in San Diego Bay.

SCCWRP also completed two studies of monitoring programs imposed on publicly owned treatment works (POTWs) discharging to the Southern California Bight. A study of the programs for the large POTWs was conducted with support from all of the SCCWRP member agencies. The results of this study were used by the Regional Board in adopting the monitoring program for the discharge from the City of San Diego's Point Loma treatment plant. A similar study was conducted for the small POTWs under contract with the Regional Board. The final report for this study is pending. The results of this study will be used in development of recommended monitoring programs for dischargers scheduled for discharge permit reissuance in 2005, including the San Elijo Joint

Powers Authority, the City of Escondido, the City of Oceanside, the Fallbrook Public Utilities District and the Encina Waste Water Authority.

KEY ISSUES: Because of the prestige of the SCCWRP scientists and the fact that SCCWRP is governed and funded by both regulatory and discharger agencies, its research products are widely accepted by the Regional Board’s stakeholder community.

LEGAL CONCERNS: None

SUPPORTING None

RECOMMENDATION(S): None